



Affordability



Talent



Success



Transitions



Value

HIGHER EDUCATION *Matters*

A Statewide Strategic Agenda for
Kentucky Postsecondary Education

2022-2030

Revised 2025



KENTUCKY'S PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY SYSTEM

VISION

Kentucky will be a national leader in building a strong, sustainable and equitable economy through increased educational attainment and affordable, high-quality postsecondary programs for all.

MISSION

Kentucky's postsecondary education system drives innovation, enhances public health and well-being, breaks cycles of generational poverty and improves quality of life by preparing students to be lifelong learners and excel in a diverse, knowledge-based economy.

VALUES

- **Access, engagement & belonging**
- **Transparency & accountability**
- **Comprehensive student support**
- **Institutional collaboration**
- **Quality & excellence**
- **Affordability & accessibility**
- **Innovation**
- **Business & community partnerships**



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Aaron Thompson, Ph.D.

In accordance with Kentucky Revised Statute 164.020, we are pleased to present “Higher Education Matters: A Statewide Strategic Agenda for Kentucky Postsecondary Education, 2022-2030.”

This agenda advances a bold vision for increased economic growth and vitality in the Commonwealth through improvements in the education and skill levels of our workforce. It establishes strategic priorities to drive higher education innovation and improvement, and key performance indicators to monitor progress toward an ambitious educational attainment goal - for 60% of working-age Kentuckians to have a high-quality postsecondary credential by the year 2030.

The previous iteration of this agenda, “Stronger by Degrees,” promoted high-impact practices that enabled us to reimagine developmental education and infuse workplace essential skills into select degree programs. “Higher Education Matters” will accelerate the adoption of high-impact practices that further improve teaching and learning, ensure the quality and relevancy of postsecondary credentials and invite individuals underrepresented in higher education onto our campuses in greater numbers.

A critical focus of “Higher Education Matters” is ensuring higher education is within the reach of all Kentuckians. We must ensure everyone has access to life-changing postsecondary credentials,

as well as the academic, social and emotional supports to succeed. Doing so is both an economic and moral imperative.

This strategic agenda provides a framework that is fixed enough to provide focus and stability, yet flexible enough to respond to changing conditions. Revisions in 2024 and 2025 include new key performance indicators to monitor college affordability and return on investment; adjustments to some objectives and strategies to better reflect statewide priorities; and changes to comply with the passage of House Bill 4 in 2025.

This plan was not created in a vacuum. It relies on the contributions of many constituencies and committees. I would be remiss if I did not thank the hundreds of individuals - including CPE board members, higher education leaders, faculty members, students, K-12 educators, legislators, employers and partners - who provided valuable insight and direction throughout the development and revision process.

This is not CPE’s strategic plan; this agenda belongs to each and every one of us. Kentucky will rise or fall based on our collective, united efforts to enable all residents to reach their highest potential. We have a lot of ground to cover, but together we can navigate the path toward a more educated, prosperous Commonwealth.



Kentucky will rise or fall based on our collective, united efforts to enable all residents to reach their highest potential.



INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Matters

Restoring Higher Education's Value Proposition

This strategic agenda for Kentucky postsecondary education is built on a simple, enduring premise: higher education matters to our state and its people.

Higher education empowers individuals to reach their highest potential and achieve personal and professional fulfillment. It improves collective health and well-being, advances knowledge and discovery, ignites innovation and fuels our economy.

Research studies enumerate its benefits to individuals and society. On average, college graduates earn more money, have lower rates of unemployment, enjoy better health, live longer and are more active citizens and volunteers. States with high levels of educational attainment - like Massachusetts, Colorado and Washington - generate higher tax revenues, create more jobs, spend more money in local economies and devote fewer resources to disease, addiction and incarceration.

Despite these findings, the value of college has become a matter of debate. Media stories portray recent college graduates as underemployed and overburdened with debt. These voices have undermined the public's faith in higher education at a time when a college credential is more important than ever. By the year 2031, 72% of all U.S. jobs will require some postsecondary education or training, according to the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University. In Kentucky, that percentage is 63%.

We must restore the value proposition to higher education. Kentucky's future prosperity and quality of life depend on it.

Developing the Agenda

This agenda is Kentucky's plan to create a more efficient, responsive and innovative higher education system. It reaffirms our goal for 60% of Kentucky adults to have a postsecondary credential by the year 2030, and builds on unprecedented gains in degree production over the last decade.

It responds to the suggestions and concerns of hundreds of Kentuckians - higher education faculty and administrators, K-12 educators, board members, legislators, employers and others - who worked with us on its development. Based on trend analysis, research and stakeholder feedback, this agenda identifies the strategic priorities that will focus our efforts over the next decade. They are: affordability, transitions, success, talent and value.

A Framework for Accountability

This agenda includes common objectives that will guide system-wide progress. The statewide strategies will be led by CPE, in conjunction with its partners. Public institutions will implement campus-level strategies to advance this agenda. The strategic agenda will be reviewed and revised every three years or more often, if necessary.

CPE and campuses will set numeric targets for key performance indicators, which also will be updated on a three-year cycle. Additional contextual metrics will help us monitor progress and adjust strategies as needed, but targets will not be set.

Kentucky's higher education institutions will pursue these objectives, strategies and targets as one system, united by common challenges and enhanced by individual strengths.

We must restore the value proposition to higher education.



Higher education strengthens the economy, creates wealth, reduces inequality, breaks cycles of generational poverty, improves health and well-being and preserves democracy.



60% of Kentucky's working-age adults (ages 25-64) will have a high-quality postsecondary credential by the year 2030.



KY's 60x30 Goal Our North Star

Progress Toward the Goal

In ancient times, sailors used the North Star as a navigational guide due to its fixed position in the sky. Today, the North Star has come to symbolize any guiding principle or purpose. During prosperity or adversity, it is a steadfast point on which we set our sights.

For Kentucky's postsecondary system, the 60x30 goal is our North Star. The previous strategic agenda, "Stronger by Degrees," established this educational attainment goal back in 2016. With its adoption, Kentucky joined 45 other states and the Lumina Foundation in efforts to raise the education and skill levels of our workforce to meet current and future demands for talent.

Kentucky has made phenomenal progress toward the goal. Between 2010 and 2020, Kentucky's improvement in educational attainment ranked fifth among states, according to Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce. At 56.2% in 2023, Kentucky's attainment rate is fast approaching the national average.

Much of this progress is due to increases in short-term credentials, which include certificates and industry certifications. The state's current short-term credential attainment rate is 16.7%, of which 11.8% are certificates and 4.9% are industry certifications.

Statewide Challenges

However, Kentucky is facing some strong headwinds in the decade to come, which threaten to blow us off course. These include:

- A declining number of high school graduates. Overall, Kentucky's high school graduate cohort size is expected to fall by 3% from 2022 to 2035. Decreases will be much larger in rural areas, which will disproportionately affect enrollment at some comprehensive universities and community and technical colleges. Campuses must increase participation among working-age adults and out-of-state students to maintain current enrollment levels.

- Falling adult enrollments. Undergraduate enrollment among adults 25 and older has fallen more than 40% over the last decade. Kentucky will need aggressive recruitment efforts and redesigned programs and supports to attract adults returning to college or enrolling for the first time.

- Unequal rates of attainment. There are significant disparities in educational attainment among subpopulations that must be closed.

Looking Ahead

CPE will provide more detailed projections to monitor progress toward the 60% attainment goal, and focus on raising the education and skills levels of our current workforce.

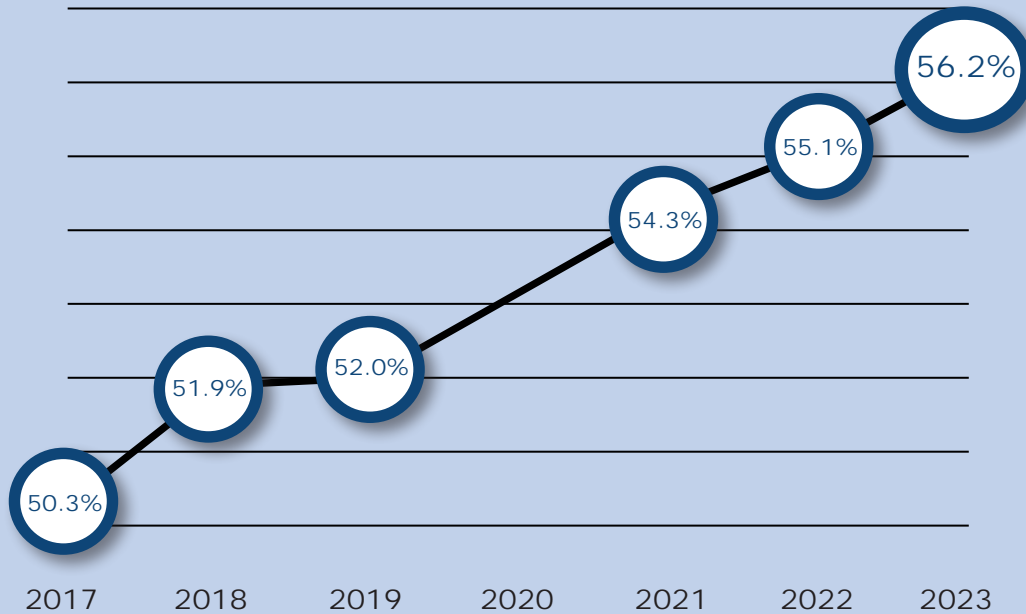
From 2010 to 2020, KY's progress in educational attainment ranked 5th in the nation.



KENTUCKY'S ATTAINMENT GOAL

60% with a postsecondary credential

KY is making progress toward the 60% goal



Percentage of Kentuckians (25-64) with a short-term certificate or higher. 2020 data are not available due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

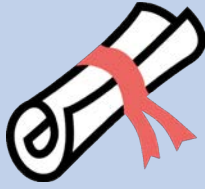
KY attainment by credential level

Certificate



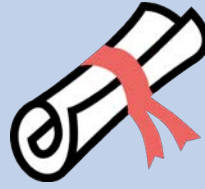
16.7%

Associate



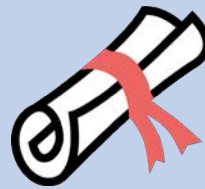
9.9%

Bachelor's



18.2%

Graduate



11.5%

Percentage of Kentuckians (ages 25-64) with postsecondary credentials in 2023.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Building on previous agendas, “Higher Education Matters” is a blueprint for accelerating change and improvement in Kentucky’s public postsecondary system. The strategic priorities identified in this plan represent our primary issues and top concerns as we face head-on the demographic, economic and technological forces reshaping higher education in Kentucky.





AFFORDABILITY

A Strategic Priority

Statewide Challenges

Over the last two decades, federal and state disinvestment in public higher education has shifted the majority of college costs to students and their families. In the past, the state of Kentucky subsidized about two-thirds of postsecondary operational costs, with tuition and fees accounting for one-third. Now, this situation is reversed, with one-third of costs supported by state appropriations and two-thirds borne by students.

Consequently, increases in college costs have become a serious burden for many Kentucky families. While the cost of living has steadily increased, real wages have remained flat. Declining amounts of college savings mean student borrowing is at an all-time high. As of 2024, student loan borrowers in the U.S. collectively owed over \$1.7 trillion in federal and private loans, exceeding auto and credit card debt.

At a time when postsecondary education and training are essential to long-term economic security, college is becoming financially inaccessible to our most vulnerable populations. If left unchecked, declines in college access will lead to greater income inequality, making it all but impossible for everyday Kentuckians to get ahead.

Responding to rising concerns from students, parents and elected officials, the Council has elevated college affordability to one of five strategic priorities our public postsecondary system will pursue over the next eight years.

Federal & state disinvestment in public higher education has shifted costs to students.

Systemwide Responses

To this end, the state's higher education system will build on the success achieved over the last decade to increase college access and affordability.

We will work with elected leaders to increase state funding for postsecondary education and student financial aid, so rising costs are not passed on to students.

We will work to limit increases in tuition and fees, while exploring collaborative purchasing agreements, open educational resources and other efficiency measures to keep ancillary costs in check.

We will work in partnership with P-12 educators, advisors, counselors and other stakeholders to help incoming students understand the complexities of college pricing, and the role of grants, scholarships and responsible borrowing in managing costs. The published cost of attendance stops many students and families in their tracks. Providing greater transparency around out-of-pocket costs will ensure sticker shock does not prevent students from applying.

We also will focus on decreasing the time it takes to earn a credential, since additional semesters mean additional cost. Early postsecondary opportunities and improved advising are strategies that can help students graduate on time.



Kentucky will ensure postsecondary education is affordable for all Kentuckians.



AFFORDABILITY

Objectives, Strategies & KPIs

1. Reduce financial barriers to college enrollment and completion.

- 1a. Work with campuses, state leaders and other stakeholders to increase access to grants and scholarships for low- and middle-income students.
- 1b. Moderate increases in tuition and mandatory fees at Kentucky's public colleges and universities.
- 1c. Work with campuses to reduce unmet financial need and student loan debt among undergraduate students.
- 1d. Monitor the financial health of Kentucky public institutions and their ability to adequately discount costs for students.

2. Improve the public's understanding of the true cost of college and how to pay for it.

- 2a. Provide informational resources, financial literacy and advising strategies for counselors, teachers and community partners on paying for college.
- 2b. Coordinate and support efforts to educate Kentuckians about changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and increase the number of individuals who complete the application.
- 2c. Establish state-level networks for high school counselors and other college access professionals to share effective practices, build expertise and develop common outreach and messaging for Kentucky students.

Key Performance Indicators

First-time, In-state Student Unmet Need (State- and Campus-Level): The total cost of attendance (tuition, fees, room and board, transportation, textbooks and other costs) for an academic year minus Student Aid Index or SAI (formerly Expected Family Contribution or EFC) and all financial aid, excluding loans.

Debt at Graduation (Contextual Metric): The sum of loans taken from the year of first enrollment to the highest undergraduate credential earned.



COLLEGE IN KENTUCKY

May Cost Less Than You Think

The actual cost of college is less than advertised.

The total estimated cost of college, including tuition, room, board, fees and other expenses



Sticker Price

The actual out-of-pocket cost of college once federal, state and institutional grants and scholarships are factored in



Net Price

2-Yr. Public

\$12,550

\$5,567

4-Yr. Public

\$24,629

\$12,985

This chart reflects median annual amounts for in-state, undergraduate students at Kentucky public institutions. For median amounts by institution, visit KY Students' Right to Know at <https://kystats.ky.gov/Reports/Tableau/KSRTK>

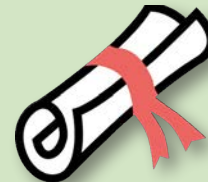
What a typical KY undergraduate owes at graduation:

Graduate of a public community and technical college



\$4,138

Graduate of a public university



\$18,674

Amounts reflect median loan balances for undergraduate students who completed a credential in 2022-23, including students with zero debt. When students with no debt are excluded, these medians rise to \$13,644 at a public community and technical college and \$33,317 at a public university. Source: Council on Postsecondary Education. "Undergraduate Student Debt Levels in Kentucky," April 2024.





Kentucky will ensure more students transition to college prepared to succeed.



TRANSITIONS

A Strategic Priority

Statewide Challenges

Over the decade, the U.S. saw little movement in the percentage of high school seniors enrolling directly in college. Kentucky, on the other hand, experienced a rather steep decline in its college-going rate, falling from nearly 60% in 2015 to 53.3% in 2022.

Systemwide Responses

There are actions higher education can take to help more high school graduates successfully transition to postsecondary programs. We can provide extra and earlier guidance to students and remove tripwires that cause individuals to stumble on the path to college, particularly if they are first-generation or historically underserved by postsecondary institutions. We can simplify bureaucratic and onerous admission processes, for instance, and help demystify financial aid applications like the FAFSA.

The rise of early college experiences in high school show tremendous promise. Dual credit/enrollment, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and similar programs allow students to earn college credit while still in high school, giving them a jump-start on postsecondary education. The challenge is to expand access to

students of all socioeconomic backgrounds and ability levels, and ensure credits count toward degree requirements and not just as electives.

It is unrealistic to expect high school guidance counselors to help every student navigate the maze of college admission requirements and decisions. With its partners, CPE will advocate for dedicated college coaches and advisors in middle and secondary schools, and create resources that walk students and their parents step-by-step through the planning and application process.

The rise of early college experiences in high school show tremendous promise.

Colleges and universities also must do their part to enroll and retain students through those critical first months. CPE will work with campuses to increase recruitment of traditional-age students, as well as working-age adults balancing careers and families. We will streamline and digitize admission processes and materials to the greatest extent possible.

Predictive analytics can help pinpoint at-risk students and better target intervention strategies.

Such actions will go a long way toward creating smoother educational transitions, from cradle to career.



TRANSITIONS

Objectives, Strategies & KPIs

3. Increase students' readiness to enter postsecondary education.

- 3a. Expand access to high-quality, early postsecondary opportunities.
- 3b. Develop digital resources to help students explore career interests and college options.
- 3c. Partner with public P-12 schools, adult education programs and postsecondary institutions to provide outreach to students to help them prepare and plan for college.

4. Increase college-going rates and enrollment in postsecondary education.

- 4a. Enhance college recruitment strategies through partnerships with postsecondary institutions and other stakeholders, with attention to first-generation, adult and low-income students, as well as traditional-age students.
- 4b. Work with education providers to streamline and simplify postsecondary admission processes.

Key Performance Indicators

Undergraduate Enrollment (State- & Campus-Level): Total unduplicated number of students who enroll in an undergraduate program in an academic year, either full-time or part-time.

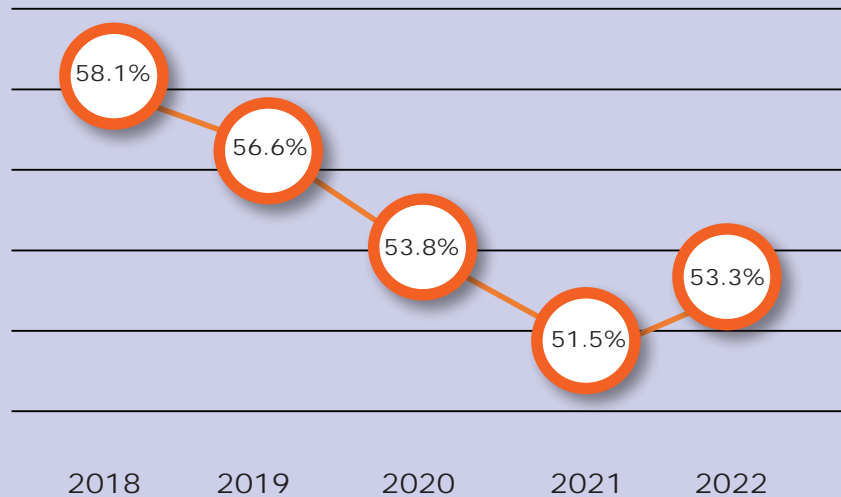
Immediate College-Going Rate (State-Level): Percent of recent Kentucky high school graduates who attend any in-state or out-of-state postsecondary institution in the summer, fall or spring following high school graduation.



IMPROVING COLLEGE ACCESS

Strengthening P-12 to College Transitions

Kentucky must increase its immediate college-going rate.



Percentage of KY high school students who enroll directly in an in-state or out-of-state public or private college the fall or spring following graduation.

Source: KY Center for Statistics (KYSTATS)

These statewide initiatives will help.



- A federal grant program administered by CPE
- Provides early college awareness & readiness
- Serves thousands of K-12 and college students in low-income schools across Kentucky
- Teaches students how to plan, apply and pay for college
- Follows students from middle school through their first year of college
- Offers mentoring and support



Commonwealth Education Continuum

- Collaboration of CPE, KDE, KHEAA and the Education & Workforce Development Cabinet
- Recommendations for increased early college experiences
- Strategies for improved college & career readiness
- Diversification of teaching & advising corps



SUCCESS

A Strategic Priority

Statewide Successes & Challenges

Kentucky's colleges and universities made impressive gains in retention and completion over the last decade. The six-year graduation rate rose from 48.9% to 59.9% at public universities, while the three-year graduation rate at KCTCS jumped from 23.4% to 41.2%.

Increasing degree production is an overriding concern of this agenda, but we are not prioritizing quantity over quality. High-quality credentials equip students to thrive in a rapidly evolving world that demands critical thinking, ingenuity, flexibility and teamwork. From certificates to doctorates, we must ensure students master the content, skills and mindsets necessary for future career success and personal fulfillment. The challenge is producing quality credentials at a pace commensurate with our overarching attainment goal.

Systemwide Responses

In the years ahead, Kentucky higher education will double down on the widespread adoption of high-impact practices that research has proven to be effective. CPE launched the Kentucky Student Success Collaborative, a one-of-a-kind center dedicated to the advancement of innovative strategies and best practices. This entity will increase our capacity to engage and unite campuses in more sustained, comprehensive improvement efforts.

We will continue to improve transfer from two-year to four-year institutions by helping students and practitioners understand how credits apply to specific degree programs across the state. We will promote credit for prior learning and accelerated programs to make our institutions friendlier for working-age adults, an underserved market that is critical to creating a more competitive workforce and reaching our 60x30 goal.

Just as technology is revolutionizing the way we work, it is also transforming teaching and learning. Artificial intelligence, global online collaborations and personalized learning software are only the beginning. Combined with face-to-face instruction, technology can accelerate and deepen learning in profound ways. But we cannot harness these powerful tools if educators lack training and resources, or if broadband access is not universally accessible and affordable.

The system will not prioritize the quantity of credentials over quality.

Finally, we intend to make internships, apprenticeships, service and other forms of work-based learning the rule rather than the exception. Students should be able to connect classroom learning to the world of work, and articulate these connections to employers. More robust employer partnerships will increase the relevance and responsiveness of academic programs and ensure students are able to secure meaningful employment in their field of study.



Kentucky will ensure more students earn high-quality degrees and credentials.



SUCCESS

Objectives, Strategies & KPIs

5. Increase persistence in and timely completion of postsecondary programs.

- 5a. Share, implement and evaluate emerging, promising and proven practices supporting student success and college completion.
- 5b. Identify and promote efforts to ensure “on-time” program completion.
- 5c. Work with campuses and other state and national partners to close opportunity and success gaps for first-generation, adult and low-income students.
- 5d. Work with education providers to limit barriers to enrollment and completion for students balancing the competing demands of work, life, family and school.

6. Maximize transfer of academic and experiential credit.

- 6a. Work with campuses to reduce barriers that prevent the seamless transfer of credit.
- 6b. Promote transfer opportunities and program pathways.
- 6c. Encourage credit for prior learning and competency-based instruction.

7. Ensure academic offerings are high-quality, relevant and inclusive.

- 7a. Work with campuses to ensure the essential competencies and outcomes outlined in the Kentucky Graduate Profile are embedded in undergraduate programs.
- 7b. Enhance the relevance, inclusivity and quality of academic offerings through improvements in program review and approval processes.

Key Performance Indicators

Undergraduate Degrees and Credentials (State- & Campus-Level): Total degrees and credentials awarded by public universities and KCTCS institutions.

Graduation Rate (State- & Campus-Level): The percent of first-time, full-time credential-seeking students receiving a bachelor’s degree within 6 years at public universities, or an associate degree or credential within 3 years at KCTCS from their starting institution.

2-Year to 4-Year Transfer (Sector-Level): Percent of first-time, full-time credential-seeking students entering KCTCS in the fall who transfer to any in-state, 4-year public institution within 3 years of entry.

Retention Rate (State- and Campus-Level): Percent of first-time, credential-seeking students enrolled in the summer or fall who return to the same institution the following fall.



ACCELERATING SUCCESS

Building on a Decade of Credential Growth

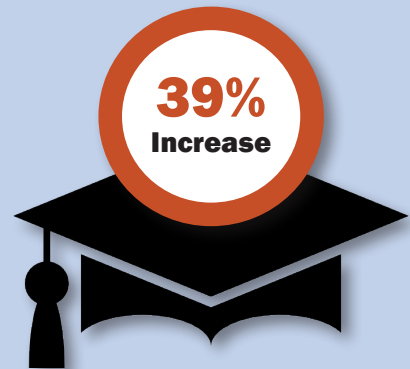
Undergraduate Credential Growth Over the Last Decade:



In Certificates, Diplomas
& Associate Degrees
Awarded by KCTCS



In Bachelor's Degrees
Awarded by Public
Universities



In Graduate Degrees
Awarded by Public
Universities

The Kentucky Student Success Collaborative

To accelerate meaningful transformation around student success, CPE launched the KYSSC, a first-of-its-kind statewide program supporting greater degree completion and successful career transitions. KYSSC offers its higher education partners the following resources and assistance:

Professional Development

Virtual and online assistance based on campus priorities.

Communities of Practice

Collaboration and resource sharing around common challenges and opportunities.

Resource & Knowledge Hub

An interactive, online platform for faculty and practitioners to share experiences and resources.

Technical Assistance

Guidance from national organizations and thought leaders on issues and challenges.

Change Leadership Institute

A forum for faculty, staff, and administrators to build capacity for growth and innovation.

<https://kystudentsuccess.org>



Kentucky will increase talent and innovation to support our communities, employers and economy.



TALENT

A Strategic Priority

Statewide Challenges

A primary purpose of postsecondary education is to produce adaptive, highly skilled workers to fuel the economy. As noted by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, nearly three out of four jobs in the U.S. will demand postsecondary experience by the year 2031.

A 2021 report by the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce estimates that the state has 90,000 to 100,000 job openings in any given month, and 65% to 85% of these vacancies require training, credentialing or degrees beyond high school. Data from the Chamber's Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) program show that only 30% of the state's jobs require a high school diploma or less, corroborating this finding.

At 57.9%, Kentucky currently has one of the lowest workforce participation rates in the nation. Poor health, substance use disorders and childcare shortages are partly to blame, but the lack of requisite skills and credentials, especially in Appalachian counties, is a large and growing part of the problem. The lack of active, skilled workers limits Kentucky's economic growth and expansion, increases spending on public assistance programs and reduces state tax revenues.

***65% to 85%
of Kentucky
job openings
require training
beyond high
school.***

Systemwide Responses

Kentucky must expand postsecondary access to undereducated, working-age adults to fill critical work shortages in healthcare, STEM fields, early childhood development and other high-demand areas. Work-based education opportunities, tuition assistance and public-private partnerships can put adults to work while they gain valuable credentials that move them up the career ladder.

Endless debates pitting technical training against liberal arts education miss the larger point: today's graduates need both. We must ensure liberal arts graduates gain technical and vocational proficiencies, just as students pursuing technical and vocational credentials gain exposure to the humanities and liberal arts.

Besides talent production, higher education institutions drive economic development through basic and applied research and business services. Innovations originating in laboratories are driven to the marketplace, spawning new companies and creating products and processes that improve our lives. To maximize economic development, these efforts should be aligned with the state's emerging and existing industries.

Finally, Kentucky's postsecondary system will continue its mission of regional stewardship by working with community partners to exchange knowledge and expertise for the mutual benefit of the Commonwealth.



TALENT

Objectives, Strategies & KPIs

8. Improve postsecondary education's responsiveness to and alignment with current and projected workforce demands.

8a. Engage post-traditional learners, veterans, justice-involved individuals and others in programs designed to fill critical workplace shortages.

8b. Work with colleges and universities to strengthen campus-based career advising and development.

8c. Facilitate meaningful partnerships among employers, community partners and education providers to improve the career outcomes of postsecondary programs and strengthen Kentucky's workforce and economy.

9. Guide investments in research, training and scholarships to support innovation and growth.

9a. Identify high-growth, high-demand and high-wage industries by region and target postsecondary programs for increased enrollment in those areas.

9b. Encourage targeted research, the development of signature academic programs and expanded community engagement supporting Kentucky's high-need workforce areas.

9c. Work with the General Assembly and other policy makers to alleviate barriers to workforce participation.

Key Performance Indicators

Graduate and Professional Degrees (State- & Campus-Level): Total number of graduate/professional degrees awarded in an academic year.

Statewide Educational Attainment Goal (State-Level): Percent of Kentuckians ages 25-64 with a postsecondary credential (certificate or higher).



WORK-READY GRADUATES

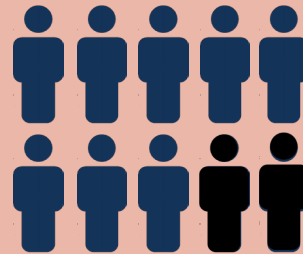
Producing Talent for Kentucky Employers



Only **48%** of Kentuckians have skills training beyond high school, which **65%-85%** of jobs require.

Source: KY Chamber of Commerce, "20 Years in the Making: Kentucky's Workforce Crisis." September 2021.

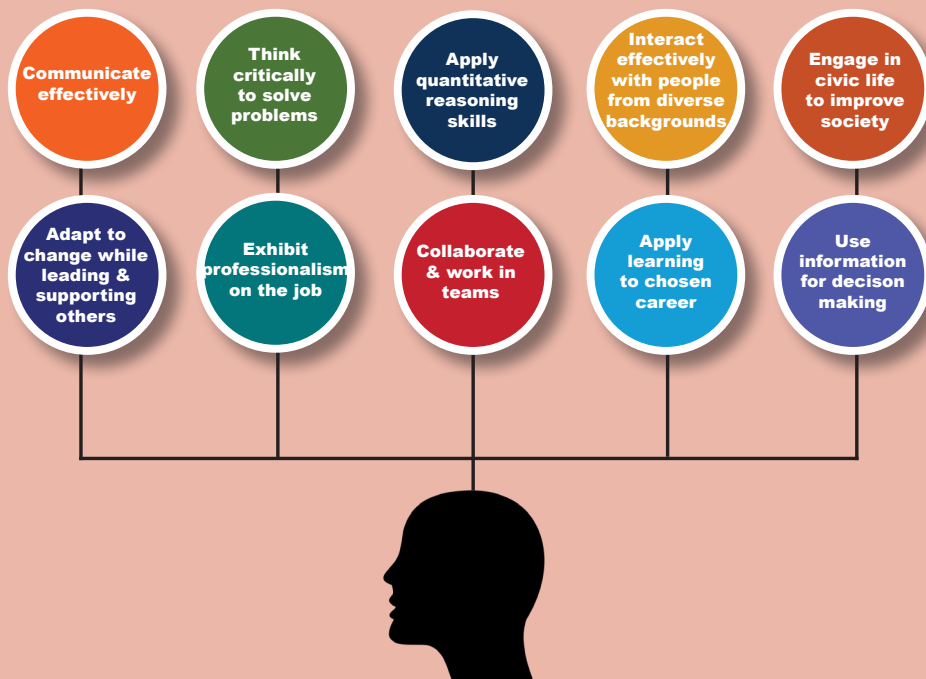
8 out of 10



Kentucky businesses have trouble finding workers with the right skills.

Source: 2017 study conducted by Talent Pipeline Management, a statewide initiative of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce.

Kentucky Graduate Profile



In partnership with Kentucky campuses, CPE identified 10 essential skills that employers expect in college graduates. CPE is working with campuses to integrate these competencies into their curricular and co-curricular offerings.



VALUE

A Strategic Priority

The Perceived Value of College

Increasingly, Americans are questioning the value of higher education. The extent of this skepticism varies according to socioeconomic status, political party affiliation, geographic region and other factors.

When Gallup first polled Americans about their faith in higher education in 2015, 57% had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in higher education, while 10% had little or no confidence. By 2024, these percentages were nearly evenly divided, with 36% reporting a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in higher education, and 32% reporting little or no confidence.

The Actual Value of College

Unfortunately, negative beliefs about the value of college are based more on feeling than fact. College's return on investment in strict financial terms depends on how much you paid for your degree and the marketability of your chosen field. Some students reap greater financial rewards than others. But to promote the belief that college is no longer a wise investment is a grave disservice to parents and students everywhere. While a college credential does not guarantee economic security, the lack of a credential most certainly limits earning potential and perpetuates generational poverty in our communities.

In September 2021, CPE released a study showing that among Kentucky's high school class of 2011, postsecondary graduates were earning substantially more money than high school graduates by 2019, despite fewer years of full-time work. The typical community college or

university graduate recouped their higher education investment in about three to five years, depending on the credential earned.

Over a 30-year career, bachelor's degree graduates in Kentucky make about \$1.2 million more than high school graduates, while those with associate degrees make nearly half a million more.

Systemwide Responses

The Council on Postsecondary Education regularly disseminates communications and public awareness materials to counteract negative opinions about the value of college. We

educate students about the benefits of a college credential, and inform policy makers about how higher education increases tax revenue, decreases unemployment and public assistance expenditures, improves health outcomes and produces a myriad of benefits that can't easily be quantified, like increased volunteerism and voting.

Part of this effort is helping Kentuckians understand that college is not only a four-year, residential undergraduate degree. There are a multitude of college options in our state, many technical in nature, that allow students to pursue careers in the skilled trades, ranging from short-term certificates to applied associate degrees.

It is our hope that increasing higher education's value proposition will lead to greater investment from both the General Assembly and the private sector. More profoundly, it will restore our belief in higher education's ability to put Americans on a path to future prosperity and fulfillment.

Workers with bachelor's degrees make \$1.2M more than high school graduates over a lifetime.



Kentucky will improve public understanding that postsecondary education is key to greater opportunity and economic growth.



VALUE

Objectives, Strategies & KPIs

10. Increase the public's belief in the transformative power of postsecondary education.

10a. Implement communications strategies that articulate what postsecondary education is (i.e., it includes short-term technical training, certifications and degrees) and why it's critically important to individuals and the Commonwealth.

10b. Leverage partnerships with campuses, state agencies and national partners to amplify messages about postsecondary education's value and return on investment.

11. Build support for greater investment in postsecondary education.

11a. Communicate the benefits of higher education and the need for increased state and federal support.

11b. Seek funding from foundations and other external sources to support Strategic Agenda priorities.

Contextual Performance Indicators

State General Fund Appropriations (State-Level): Percent change in net general fund appropriations for full-time equivalent students, excluding state financial aid or state monies for debt service.

Economic Mobility (State-Level): Percent of low-income students who are earning salaries in the top 50 percent of Kentucky wages within three years of graduation.



HIGHER EDUCATION MATTERS

College-Educated Citizens Build a Better Kentucky

College Benefits Individuals & Society



Earnings

College graduates earn more and are less likely to rely on public assistance.



Health

College graduates are more likely to be insured, exercise and enjoy better health.



Civic Responsibility

College graduates are more likely to vote, donate to charity and be civically engaged.



Literacy

College graduates are more likely to read to their children and be supportive of their education overall.



Employment

College graduates are more likely to find jobs and stay employed, even in a down economy.



Economy

The state gains more from college graduates through higher earnings and less dependence on public assistance.



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Academic & Strategic Initiatives Committee

Lori Harper, Chair
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Colby Birkes
Karyn Hoover
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Robert Staat
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Elected & State Officials

Jacqueline Coleman, Lt. Governor
Jason Glass, Commissioner of Education
Regina Huff, State Representative
Robert Stivers, Senate President
James Tipton, State Representative

Stephen Pruitt, Southern Regional Education Board
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Henry Stoeber, Association of Governing Boards
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Focus Groups On Issues

- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- College Affordability
- Transitioning from Postsecondary Education to the Workforce
- Engaging the Adult Learner
- Stronger Partnerships between P-12 and Postsecondary Education

2022 Focus Groups with Standing Committees

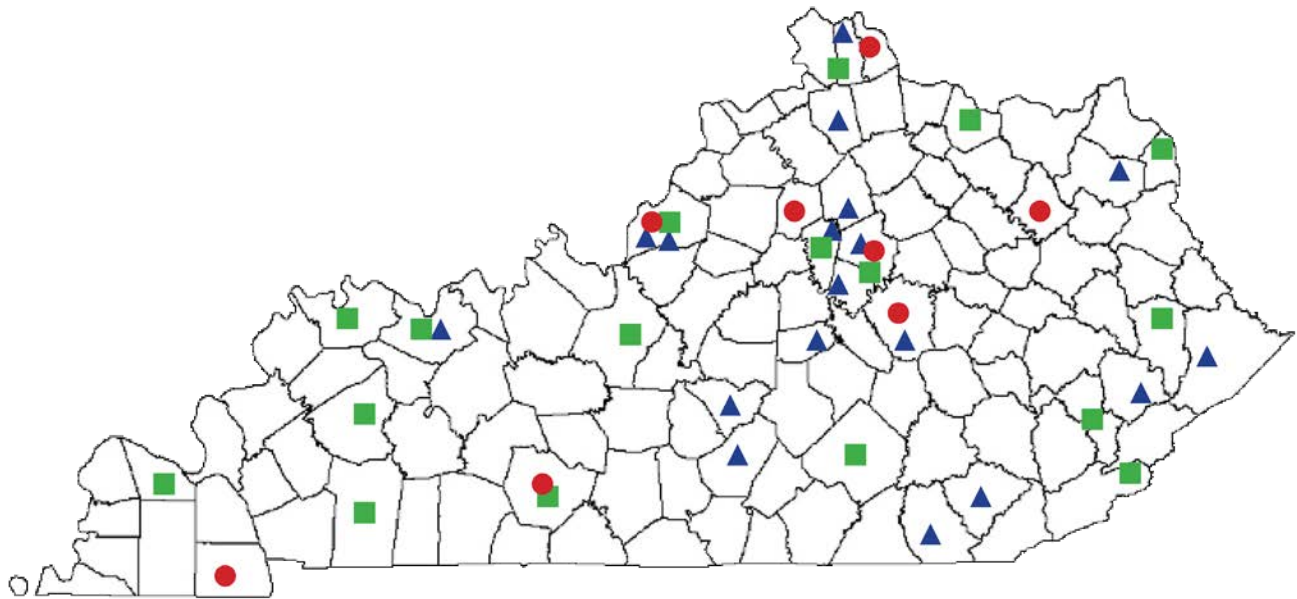
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KENTUCKY CAMPUSES



● Public Universities

Eastern Kentucky University
Kentucky State University
Morehead State University
Murray State University
Northern Kentucky University
University of Kentucky
University of Louisville
Western Kentucky University

■ Kentucky Community & Technical College System

Ashland Community & Technical College
Big Sandy Community & Technical College
Bluegrass Community & Technical College
Elizabethtown Community & Technical College
Gateway Community & Technical College
Hazard Community & Technical College
Henderson Community College
Hopkinsville Community College
Jefferson Community & Technical College
Madisonville Community College
Maysville Community & Technical College
Owensboro Community & Technical College
Somerset Community College
Southcentral Kentucky Community & Technical College
Southeast Kentucky Community & Technical College
West Kentucky Community & Technical College
KCTCS System Office Headquarters

▲ Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities

Alice Lloyd College
Asbury University
Bellarmine University
Berea College
Brescia University
Campbellsville University
Centre College

Georgetown College
Kentucky Christian University
Kentucky Wesleyan College
Lindsey Wilson College
Midway University
Spalding University
Thomas More University

Transylvania University
Union Commonwealth University
University of Pikeville
University of the Cumberlands



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